Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

August 31, 2000

1420 East 6th Ave.
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

Environmental Quality Council
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Fisheries Division
Endangered Species Coordinator
Nongame Coordinator
Native Species Coordinator, Fisheries
Missoula Office
Montana State Library, Helena
MT Environmental Information Center
Montana Audubon Council
Lewis and Clark County Conservation District, 790 Colleen Street, Helena, MT 59601
U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Helena
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Helena
State Historic Preservation Office, Helena
Mr. Jim Robinson, 756 South Davis Street, Helena, MT 59601
Hydrotech Water Resource Consultants, P.O. Box 9237, Helena, MT 59604

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Please find enclosed an Environmental Assessment prepared for a Future Fisheries Project tentatively planned to restore approximately 700 feet of stream channel within a 6,000 foot reach of Poorman Creek. This stream reach incorporates the North and South forks and the main stem. This proposed project is located on property owned by Mr. Jim Robinson approximately 9 miles southeast of the town of Lincoln in Lewis and Clark County.

Please submit any comments that you have by 5:00 P.M., October 2, 2000 to the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks in Helena at the address listed above. Completion of this project is contingent upon approval being granted by the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at (406) 444-2432.

Sincerely,

Mark Lere, Program Officer
Habitat Protection Bureau
Fisheries Division

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
Fisheries Division
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Poorman Creek Channel Restoration Project

General Purpose: The 1995 Montana Legislature enacted statute 87-1-272 through 273 which directs the Department to administer a Future Fisheries Improvement Program. The program involves physical projects to restore degraded fish habitat in rivers and lakes for the purpose of improving wild fisheries. The legislature established an earmarked funding account to help accomplish this goal. Additionally, the 1999 Montana Legislature amended statute sections 87-1-273, 15-38-202 and Section 5, Chapter 463, Laws of 1995 to create a bull trout and cutthroat enhancement program. The program calls for the enhancement of bull trout and cutthroat trout through habitat restoration, natural reproduction and reductions in species competition by way of the Future Fisheries Program. This project is being proposed to restore approximately 700 feet of stream channel within a 6,000 foot reach of the North and South forks and the main stem of Poorman Creek. Restoration efforts call for channel modifications to create a proper channel dimension, pattern and profile; protection of eroding stream banks using sloping and the installation of erosion control cloth; and the addition of riparian vegetation in areas where bank cover is reduced or lacking. The project site is located on property owned by Mr. Jim Robinson approximately 9 miles southeast of the town of Lincoln in Lewis and Clark County (Attachment 1).

I. Location of Project: This project will be conducted on the North and South forks and the main stem of Poorman Creek located approximately 9 miles southeast of the town of Linclon within Township 13 North, Range 7 West, Sections 18 and 19 in Lewis and Clark County.

II. Need for the Project: Department Goal C indicates that a Fisheries Division objective is to "provide and support programs to conserve and enhance high quality aquatic habitat and protect native aquatic species." The Future Fisheries Improvement Program is a tool to help achieve that objective.

Upper Poorman Creek supports populations of brook trout, westslope cutthroat trout and sculpin. Past land use activities, including placer mining, road crossings, grazing and channel manipulations for water development, have resulted in a degraded channel and poor riparian conditions on some reaches of the stream. Restoring the degraded portions of the stream channel to a proper dimension, pattern and profile and enhancing vegetation within the riparian corridor are expected to improve overall fish habitat in this portion of Poorman Creek.

III. Scope of the Project:

The project proposes to restore approximately 700 feet of degraded stream channel over a 6,000 foot reach of Poorman Creek. This stream reach incorporates the North and South forks and the

main stem. Proposed activities over this 700 feet of channel include: channel modifications on 5 sites to improve width to depth ratios and channel slope (approximately 460 feet); bank sloping, installation of erosion cloth and re-vegetation on 7 sites (approximately 220 feet); and replacement of an undersized culvert with a treated wooden bridge. The project also calls for the removal of old mining debris and the installation of a series of vortex rock weirs for grade control. This project is expected to cost $22,180.00. Of this total, the Future Fisheries Improvement Program would be contributing up to $4,165.00.

IV. Environmental Impact Checklist:

Please see attached checklist.

V. Explanation of Impacts to the Physical Environment

1. Terrestrial and aquatic life and habitats.

Restoration of 700 feet of degraded stream channel is expected to create a more healthy habitat for aquatic life by improving channel stability, reducing bank erosion and providing for greater habitat diversity. Habitat for riparian dependent wildlife also would be improved by enhancing the vegetation within the riparian corridor.

2. Water quantity, quality and distribution.

Short-term increases in turbidity will occur during project construction. To minimize turbidity, construction will occur during a low flow period and operation of equipment in the stream channel will be minimized to the extent practicable. The Department of Environmental Quality will be contacted to determine narrative conditions required to meet short-term water quality standards and protect aquatic biota. A 310 permit (Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act) will be obtained from the local conservation district.

3. Geology and soil quality, stability and moisture.

Soils along the stream margin would be disturbed during channel construction and bank sloping, but would quickly stabilize following proposed re-vegetation efforts. Overall, the project is expected to reduce bank erosion and improve channel stability by restoring degraded portions of the channel to a proper dimension, pattern and profile.

4. Vegetation cover, quantity and quality.

Riparian vegetation and cover would be disturbed during the period of construction. However, proposed re-vegetation efforts would act to mitigate these disturbances.

5. Aesthetics.

Aesthetics would be enhanced by removing old mining debris and stabilizing eroding stream banks. Aesthetics further would be enhanced by the enhancement of vegetation within the riparian corridor.

7. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources.

Upper Poorman Creek supports a genetically pure population of resident westslope cutthroat trout. The west-slope cutthroat trout has been designated as a species of special concern in Montana because of a continual and significant decline in natural populations. This project is expected to help conserve this population of westslope cutthroat trout by restoring approximately 700 feet of degraded stream channel.

9. Historic and archaeological sites

The proposed project likely will require an individual Army Corp of Engineers 404 permit. Therefore, the State Historic Preservation Office has been contacted to determine the need for compliance with the federal historic preservation regulations. The project will not begin until a cultural clearance is granted.

VI. Explanation of Impacts on the Human Environment.

7. Access to & quality of recreational activities.

Upper Poorman Creek contains populations of brook trout and westslope cutthroat trout. Restoration of approximately 700 feet of degraded channel would improve overall aquatic habitat and, consequently, would be expected to enhance fishing opportunities in localized areas. The landowner currently allows reasonable public access for fishing with prior permission.

VII. Discussion and Evaluation of Reasonable Alternatives.

1. No Action Alternative

If no action is taken, this degraded reach of Poorman Creek will continue to be slightly unstable and will continue to provide limited habitat for fish. Recreational opportunities associated with fish and wildlife resources will remain reduced and aesthetics will continue to be impaired.

2. The Proposed Alternative

The proposed alternative is designed to restore approximately 700 feet of degraded channel in upper Poorman Creek. While restoration of this relatively short reach of stream likely will have little impact on overall fish populations, enhancement efforts are expected to attract fish and improve fishing opportunities in localized areas. Removal of old mining debris and the enhancement of riparian vegetation should improve aesthetics

of the site.

VIII. Environmental Assessment Conclusion Section

1. Is an EIS required? No.

   We conclude from this review that the proposed activities will have a positive impact on the physical and human environment.

2. Level of public involvement.

   The proposed project was reviewed and supported by the public review panel of the Future Fisheries Improvement Program. The proposed project also will be reviewed by the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission and will be contingent upon their approval. The Environmental Assessment (EA) is being distributed to all individuals and groups listed on the cover letter. The EA will be published on the Montana Electronic Bulletin Board.

3. Duration of comment period?

   Public comment will be accepted through 5:00 PM on October 2, 2000.

4. Person responsible for preparing the EA.

   Mark Lere, Program Officer
   Habitat Protection Bureau
   Fisheries Division
   Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
   1420 East 6th Avenue
   Helena, MT 59620

   Telephone: (406) 444-2432

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS
1420 E 6th Ave, PO BOX 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701
(406) 444-2535

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Title Poorman Creek Channel Restoration Project

Division/Bureau Fisheries Division -Future Fisheries Improvement
Description of Project The project is being proposed to restore approximately 700 feet of stream channel of the North and South forks and the main stem of Poorman Creek. Restoration efforts include channel modifications to create a proper channel dimension, pattern and profile; bank sloping and the installation of erosion control cloth to protect eroding stream banks; and the addition of riparian vegetation in areas where bank cover is reduced or lacking. The project site is located on property owned by Jim Robinson approximately 9 miles southeast of the town of Lincoln in Lewis and Clark County.

POTENTIAL IMPACT ON PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

	MAJOR	MODERATE	MINOR	NONE	UNKNOWN	COMMENTS ON ATTACHED PAGES
1. Terrestrial & aquatic life and habitats			X			X
2. Water quality, quantity & distribution			X			X
3. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture			X			X
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality			X			X
5. Aesthetics			X			X
6. Air quality				X		
7. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources			X			X
8. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		X

POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

	MAJOR	MODERATE	MINOR	NONE	UNKNOWN	COMMENTS ON ATTACHED PAGES
1. Social structures & mores				X		
2. Cultural uniqueness & diversity				X		
3. Local & state tax base & tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural or industrial production				X		
5. Human health				X		
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				X		
7. Access to & quality of recreational and wilderness activities			X			X
8. Quantity & distribution of employment				X		
9. Distribution & density of population & housing				X		
10. Demands for government services				X		
11. Industrial & commercial activity				X		
12. Demands for energy				X		
13. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals				X		
14. Transportation networks & traffic flows				X		

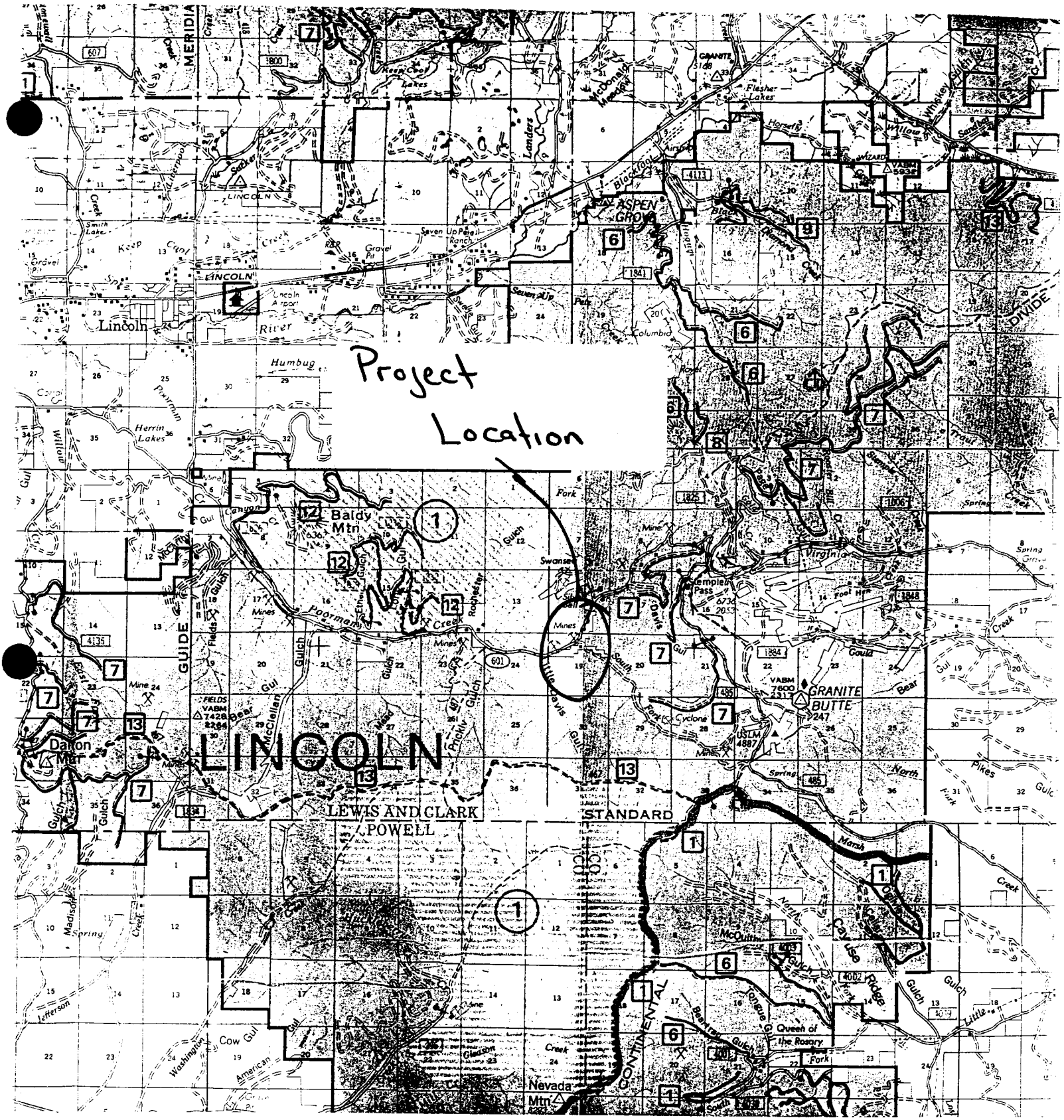
Other groups or agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction Lewis and Clark County Conservation District, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Army Corp of Engineers, Montana Department of Environmental Quality, State Historic Preservation Office

Individuals or groups contributing to this EA Hydrotech Water Resources Consultants

Recommendation concerning preparation of EIS No EIS required.

EA prepared by: Mark Lere

Date: August 31, 2000



Attachment 1. Map of Poorman Creek showing location of proposed project.